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CHAPTER 9

# Male Homosexuality, Inheritance Rules, and the Status of Women in Medieval Egypt

## The Case of the Mamlūks

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"To one dark feature we can but distantly allude," Sir William Muir, a Victorian Orientalist, wrote in 1896 (p. 217).[1] Typical of the discussion of homosexuality by Western historians, that distant allusion is all there is in a long volume. Sixty-six years later, mention is more explicit, but no lengthier: "They were addicted to homosexuality" (Moorhead 1962:72).

The mamlūk military elite, purchased anew in each generation from the steppes of Eurasia, ruled Egypt and Syria from 1249,[2] when they defeated an invading army of Crusaders led by Saint Louis, until they were defeated by the mass army of Napoleon in 1799. Their unusual social system suggests a relationship between the acceptance of homosexuality, the relatively high status of women, and the lack of inheritance; although amidst the details of battles and palace intrigues in histories of the period, there is practically nothing about the everyday life even of the rulers.

Whatever the actual status of women within the orbit of Islam,[3] it is certain that women's competence and independent enterprise were much greater in the Kipchak steppes than in the heartland of Islam. When Malik [i.e., King] al-Salih Ayoub, who had bought the first thousand boys in the steppes, died on the eve of the decisive battle with (Saint) Louis IX, Ayoub's wife, Shajar al-durr, herself a former slave, kept secret his demise and issued commands in his name for a period of several weeks. When the truth was finally discovered, the

mamlūk warriors proclaimed her Queen of Egypt. Apparently there were no objections to a woman ruler who had proved her ability in battle, but the mamlūk warriors were but recent converts to Islam. The "spiritual leader," the 'Abbāsid Khalif Mu'tasim, wrote to them, "The Prophet said, 'Unhappy is the nation governed by a woman.' If you have no men, I shall send you one." Shajar al-durr was, therefore, forced to marry her chief *amīr* (general), Aibek, who was then proclaimed sultan. She nevertheless continued to run the country's administration (Glubb 1973; Khowaiter 1978).

Neither the wealth nor the status of mamlūk was heritable. Upon the death of a warrior, his property, house, goods, wife, and slaves were sold for the benefit of the Treasury.[4] Thus, the common motivation in most social systems of passing on wealth and position to one's children was blocked for the mamlūks. Their children (*awlād al-nās*: children of [the best] people) bore Muslim names distinct from the Turkic names of the mamlūks, and spoke Arabic rather than the Turkic languages of their fathers. The children, along with all others who were born and raised Muslim, were proscribed from becoming soldiers, riding horses, or even from dressing like their mamlūk fathers; the elite of the next generation was always recruited afresh from Eurasia and removed far from natal families (Poliak 1939; Mayer 1952). "Like all slaves, they were genealogical isolates. . . . Deracination was the very essence" of the institution, and the caliphs who imported mamlūks believed that "natally alienated persons, having no basis of existence in their new societies except their masters, were likely to be totally loyal to him" (Patterson 1982:309). However, the hopes for loyalty were structurally unsound: "Behind the trust and loyalty between the ruler and these slaves lies a complex, adversary relationship; the more he trusts them, the more power they acquire; the greater their independent power grows, the less loyal they become" (Pipes 1978:35; quoted in Patterson 1982:314). Nonetheless, status hangups (about "honor") and the degree of family aggrandizing expected from the local populace made aliens a preferable source of servants and officials (Ayalon 1975a:49; Patterson 1982:310–11). At least the mamlūk was

> cut off from all his former ties: his environment, his religion, his race, his tribe, and—what is particularly important—his family. . . . He got a new family instead of that which he had lost. This was a family which was not based on blood relations, but on the relations of slavery and patronship. The patron who had bought the Mamlūk became his father; and his comrades in servitude in the school, whom he—in most cases—never knew before, and who quite often belonged to other races and other tribes, became his. (Ayalon 1980:327–28)

Separation from relatives removed temptations of nepotism and dangers of divided loyalties. Transplantation decisively removed the mamlūks far from

their natal families,[5] both geographically and culturally (especially in religion). The rigorously meritocratic mamlūk system was also designed to cut them off from their descendants:

> The Mamlūk could belong to the upper class only during his lifetime. He could not transfer either his belonging to the upper class or the rank which had acquired within the class to his offspring. The Mamlūk was a "life peer," and Mamlūk society was a one-generation nobility . . . of people whose parents were (usually) anonymous and whose offspring became (mostly) anonymous, a nobility which came from obscurity, and passed into obscurity. The sons were ejected from the upper class and were assimilated in the civilian population, although not immediately. . . . The grandsons, with but a few exceptions, did not enjoy any military privileges. (Ayalon 1980:328)

Eunuchs (*khasī*), who were also taken from outside Dar al-Islam, were more decisively blocked from accumulating wealth or honor for their children. Even more than mamlūks, eunuchs in Islamic societies are the ideal type of a one-generation nobility (Ayalon 1980:338, 1979b). In buying boys from the peripheries, both those who had been or were slated for castration and those who were going to be trained to be cavalrymen, amirs, and sultans were ensuring that the natal family of the eunuch and mamlūks would not be around to be enriched. Whatever goods (including land) the eunuchs and mamlūks accumulated could not be passed on to their sons (the eunuchs not having any). Castration was not viewed as conducive to military prowess, so was unsuitable (indeed, probably, unthinkable) for those chosen for military service. Among the many duties of eunuchs "was the supervision and education of the young Mamlūks in the military schools. . . . They formed a barrier between those youngsters and adult Mamlūks," sometimes being penetrated in their stead—at least that is how I interpret the footnote to this passage: "The eunuchs themselves were a constant object of pederasty" (Ayalon 1979b:72n9). The sultan's mamlūk novices (*kuttābī*) were not herded together into a single one of the twelve barracks in the Cairo citadel, although each barracks seems to have had a special section for novices. Novices of lesser officials also were housed with the mamlūk garrison. Developing an identification with a unit (*buyūt*, house) seems to have been judged more important than protecting the cadets from their elders. Within the units, nonetheless, there existed some identification with and special feeling for one's cohort (*khushdāshiyya*) as well as for one's patron (*ustādh*). Kinship idioms were used: the patron was called "father" (*wālid*), the mamlūk "sons" (*awlād*) called each other "brothers" (*ikhwa;* sg. *akh),* sometimes distinguishing "older brothers" (*aghawat;* sg. *agha*) from "younger brothers" (*iniyyāt;* sg. *ini*) and *tā'ifa* was used in the sense of "family" (as well as "faction") for mamlūks. Even other

mamlūks were regarded as outsiders (*gharīb*) who could not become part of such families (Ayalon 1991:318; 1980:328; 1987b:207).

Recurrently, attempts were made to pass on the sultanate itself through primogeniture, but time after time the throne was usurped by the strongest amīr.[6] A more successful attempt by lesser mamlūks to guarantee a place for descendants was to endow a pious foundation (*waqf*, generally mosques, libraries, or schools) to be administered by heirs, who could not directly receive any patrimony.[7]

The mamlūks were a caste apart with no motivation to mix with the Arab populations they were bought to protect. Their appearance was distinctive. In addition to their light skin, Browne observes that "the Mamlūks suffer not the beard to grow till they be emancipated, and hold some office, as Cashef, &c" and described their dress in Cairo circa 1792:

> Mamlūks constantly appear in the military dress, and are commonly armed with a pair of pistols, a sabre, and a dagger. They wear a peculiar cap of a greenish hue, around which is wreathed a turban. The rest of their dress resembles that of other Mohammedan citizens, and is restricted to no particular colour : but another singularity is their large drawers of thick Venetian cloth, of a crimson colour, to which are attached their slippers of red leather. On horseback they add to their arms a pair of large horse-pistols, and the *Dubbūs* or battle-axe. In battle many of them wear an open helmet, and the ancient ring armour of interwoven links of steel, worn under part of their dress, and thus concealed. These are dear. . . . Some of them are made at Constantinople, others in Persia. Their horses are of the finest Arabian breeds. (1806:54–55)

For the most part the mamlūks who attained puberty in their homelands[8] despised the Arab language that they did not encounter until they were adolescents, were illiterate,[9] and spoke their Turkic native languages. They also lived apart from the existing cities in their own colonies (including the Cairo citadel with its barracks for the Royal Mamlūks, *al-mamālik al-sultāniyya*) and only rarely intermarried with local notables' daughters.[10] Besides the obvious wish to keep troops from forming social relationships with the governed, residential segregation may have been partly an attempt to preserve expensive investments from other dangers. As Ayalon notes,

> The toughness which the Mamlūk acquired in his country of origin helped him very much in carrying out his military tasks. However, it did not make him in any way immune to diseases and epidemics in many of the Muslim lands, to which he had been transferred, certainly not in Egypt and Syria. He was much more vulnerable to them than the local inhabitants. Epidemics would kill off very high proportions of the Mamlūks, especially the newcomers among them. (1980:338–39)[11]

Along with many special prerogatives (notably their own courts of law), the mamlūks were distinguished from the rest of the population by being forbidden divorce.[12] Still more astonishingly, their wives received a fixed salary from the state, just as did the warriors themselves. These two customs greatly enhanced the autonomy of women among the mamlūks (Ayalon 1968), although they may, perhaps, also have discouraged some from marriage.[13]

The mode of homosexuality to which the mamlūks purportedly were "addicted" was pederasty, with boys, recruited from the wilderness, who were undergoing military training (*furūsīya*) in the mounted use of sword, lance, and bow, rather than with boys raised in civilized Egypt (Glubb 1973). Although Ayalon (1956:66) notes that the main function of a corps of eunuchs was "keeping Mamlūk adults away from Mamlūk boys at the military schools," it does not seem to have occurred to any of the military historians who have written about the mamlūks that sexual attraction might have played some part in selecting which boys to buy. At least one early-nineteenth-century traveler to Mesopotamia (Iraq), who was quite unimpressed with the beauty of a wanton dancing boy he saw, remarked that most of the upwards of fifty Georgian and Circassian mamlūk bodyguards of the pasha of Mousul were "extremely handsome, and all of them young and superbly dressed" (Buckingham 1827:21; cf. 167). Similarly, an earlier (pre-Napoleonic) traveler, W. G. Browne remarked that the mamlūks "are in general distinguished by the grace and beauty of their persons" (1806:54).

In addition to the general pederasty with mamlūk cadets, several amirs and sultans showed marked favoritism for some of their courtiers.[14] The most interesting case is that of the young Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammed born Kalāwūn, who scandalized his society in 1497–98 by the "unnatural" interest he showed in the (black) Sudanese slaves (*'abīd*) who bore firearms, and for their leader, Farajallah, in particular.[15] Nāsir attempted to raise the status of the modern weapons that only a few years later would be turned on the traditional, brave, sword-wielding mamlūk cavalry with devastating results by the Ottomans. This attempt to modernize/deskill the technology of warfare was motivated in part by the malik's taste for the black men whose proficiency with firearms confirmed in mamlūk minds the unworthiness of such weaponry for a skilled elite. Mamlūk cavalrymen literally looked down from their horses on foot soldiers, and this military elite successfully resisted the raising of mass armies of infantrymen. Mamlūks were somewhat more willing to accept artillery, because

> artillery is the province of specialized technicians, whose numbers form only a small part of the fighting force, requiring little change in the structure of the army.

> The arquebus, on the other hand, is a personal and mass weapon and its introduction affects a large number of troops. Hence its large-scale adoption was bound to involve far-reaching changes in the organisation and methods of warfare. To equip a soldier with an arquebus meant taking away his bow, and, what was to the Mamlūk more distasteful, depriving him of his horse, thereby reducing him to the humiliating status of a foot soldier . . . [whereas] horsemanship and all it stood for were the pivot around which the whole way of life of the Mamlūk upper class revolved and from which it derived its courtly pride and feeling of superiority. (Ayalon 1956:61) [16]

Homophobic historians (beginning with al-Makrīzī) are, thus, presented the dilemma that the sultan who tried to modernize the army—in precisely the way they recognize was necessary for continued military success—was a youth of "unstable character" much given to "debauchery" and that his "debauchery" was inextricably tied together with his motivation for the modernization that might have maintained mamlūk military superiority. "Less than twenty years before their own overthrow by firearms, nobody except a lightminded youth could seriously envisage the adoption of firearms as the chief weapons of the [mamlūk] Sultanate," is how Ayalon (1975b:36) puts it, perhaps overhastily accepting the horsemen's view of Nāsir as "frivolous" and "foolish."

When the (white) slaves revolted and slew Farajallah and about fifty other black slaves, the mamlūks told Nāsir, "We disapprove of these acts [of favor for the black firearm users]. If you wish to persist in these tastes, you had better ride by night and go away with your black slaves to faroff places!" (Lewis 1971: 75–76; Ayalon 1956:69–70 includes two slightly variant accounts). The sultan agreed to desist, and when the mamlūks began the sixteenth century with one of their traditional thirteenth century cavalry charges against the Ottoman infantry of Selim I, they met their first defeat, scandalized that Muslims would shoot other Muslims. The mamlūks regarded the Ottomans who defeated them as unchivalrous, immoral, and far inferior in the traditional arts of war.[17]

Concerned more with the external Safavid threat from Persia than with internal rebellion, and short of personnel to defend and administer the vast territories he had conquered (see the discussion of motives in Ayalon 1987a), Selim largely left mamlūks in charge of Egypt and Syria. Immediately upon his death, the mamlūks in Syria rebelled and were crushed once and for all. The Egyptian mamlūks did not join the Syrian ones, and Selim's son Suleiman continued to use them although he dispatched his Grand Vizier (and brother-in-law) Mustapha Pasha as viceroy after the death of the loyal

mamlūk viceroy Khayrbak in 1522. The cavalry charge remained the main (only?) mamlūk tactic—whether against Mongols, Ottomans, or French armies of Saint Louis or Napoléon. The last charge resulted in mamlūks being mowed down by fusillades from Napoléon's army. Seventeen ninety-eight rifles proved even more deadly than the 1517 models that had first revealed the obsolescence of the mamlūk cavalry (Ayalon 1956; 1975a; 1979a,b; 1987a). The French triumph and ensuing occupation

> undermined the basis of Mamlūk legitimacy and the raison d'être for the continued importation of Mamlūk slaves, for Mamlūks had failed to defend Islam against a Christian rival power. More importantly, determined French pursuit of the Mamlūks drained their forces and paved the way for their final liquidation by Muhammed 'Ali who assumed power in 1805. (Hatem 1986:264)

Lest it be supposed that the fall of the mamlūks had anything to do with homosexuality, it should be emphasized that the victors were no less pederastic than the mamlūks (as will be seen in the following chapter).

## Conclusion

The mamlūks exemplify a social system not built on family aggrandizement and patrimony. Without inheritance, with a very slim likelihood of living to a peaceful old age, and with wives paid directly by the state, the usual motivations for building families were lacking.[18] If, as Hocquenghem (1978:136) writes, "The great fear of homosexuality is that the succession of generations on which civilization is based may stop," the mamlūk case shows that both a military tradition and an advanced artistic culture can be transmitted with no bonds of blood. The guardians of high Arabic civilization against barbarians (whether Mongols or Crusaders), each new, unrelated generation of recruits to the elite was noted for its appreciation and patronage of the arts. Although recruited from their rude surroundings not for their aestheticism or refined tastes but for their horsemanship and prowess with sword and bow, the mamlūks built the mosques, palaces, and tombs that are the glory of Cairo, and "delighted in the delicate refinement which art could afford their home life, were lavish in their endowment of pious foundations, magnificent in their mosques and palaces and fastidious in the smallest details of dress, furniture and court etiquette" (Lane-Poole 1898:97; see Lapidus 1967; Mayer 1956; Wiet 1964, 1966).

With all the ardor of converts, they were fierce (not to mention successful) defenders of Islam against both Christian Crusaders from the northwest and

Mongols from the northeast, the very regions from which they derived (see Ayalon 1972, 1980).[19] In Ayalon's summary,

> Mamlūkdom lasted in Islam about 1000 years, although as a decisive power it existed for a considerably shorter period. . . . [The] institution does not have a real parallel outside Muslim civilization. . . . Mamlūkdom is an institution which developed exclusively within Islam, and it has no parallel worthy of its name outside its boundaries. The acquisition of slaves for the purpose of using them as soldiers is not, indeed, limited to Islam alone; but nowhere outside Muslim civilization was there ever created a military slave institution which had been planned so methodically; which had been created for such a grand purpose; which succeeded in accumulating such an immense power, and in registering such astounding achievements; and which enjoyed such a long span of life, as in Islam. (1980:322–33)

## Appendix: Lesbian Mamlūk fantasies

Hatem (1986:259, relying on Ayalon 1979a:284–86) claims,

> Lesbian women in Mamlūk harems behaved like Mamlūks, riding pedigreed horses, hunting, and playing *furusiya* (chivalrous) games. They are also said to have indulged in debauchery and wine drinking and to have accumulated enormous wealth and land with the full cooperation of the sultan, which impoverished and corrupted both the sultanate and the military aristocracy.

It is not clear to me how such behavior, or the "debaucheries" of Muhammad 'Ali's daughter Nazli (Marsot 1984:95), "challenged one of the basic political assumptions of heterosexuality and of the Mamlūk system of rigid sexual segregation" or "interfered with the prevalent practice of male traffic in women." Reports of cross-gender behavior, especially in sex-segregated settings, are not adequate bases for concluding that the women involved were exclusively homosexual, still less that they were not "trafficked in."

For a later period Hatem tries to incorporate consideration of homosexuality and the solidarity of oppressed women, seemingly unaware that the form of homosexuality was age-stratified (pederastic) rather than egalitarian/androphilic. Aside from the total lack of evidence she adduces for homosexual relationships being egalitarian in mamlūk Egypt at any point in time, or anyone having shown any interest in defusing stratification, Hatem's (1986: 260–61) interpretation that "the function of homosexuality in the Mamlūk system seems to have been a defensive response to the Mamlūk political system that produced endemic violence among men. Homosexuality represented

an effort to cement male solidarity within and across class lines" typifies an altogether too-common vagueness about agency (whose effort?) and consciousness. Reaching even further, Hatem claims that male homosexuality "was designed to increase male control over" women (p. 265).

It seems to me that Hatem projects her vision of homosexuality as inherently egalitarian across time and space to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Egypt, among women as among men. Although comradely/egalitarian/gay homosexuality may challenge and subvert the patterns of domination in a society, both gender-crossing and age-stratified homosexuality may reinforce gendered structures of dominance and hierarchy.

*Notes*

1. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 1983 annual meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association in Portland, Oregon, in a session organized by Wayne Wooden. His encouragement and that of Wayne Dynes and David Greenberg are gratefully acknowledged, as are the patient editorial labors of Will Roscoe.

2. Ayalon (1980:325) dates the beginnings of the institution much earlier: "As early as the first half of the ninth century A.D., in the reign of Caliph al-Mu'tasim, the first large-scale recruitment of Mamlūks in the service of the 'Abbāsids takes place." The word *mamlūk* means "owned thing," but "its practical meaning is 'white slave'" (Ayalon 1980:324).

3. Research based on observations of women's lives (and, especially, forms of resistance to male domination) rather than on men's ideal norms has significantly altered the picture. For example, see el-Messiri (1978), Ginat (1982), Nelson (1974), and Wikan (1980, 1982).

4. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mamlūks could transfer property to their wives, who were not sold as slaves (Hatem 1986:260), and to their sons (Ayalon 1960, 2:158, 3:288–90). Whether mamlūks remained slaves after successfully completing their training, when they took on responsibilities as warriors and tax collectors, is controversial. Volney (1787) consistently wrote of mamlūk as freedmen (*affranchis*). Ménage (1966), Repp (1968), and Glubb (1973) argue that mamlūks remained slaves. Ayalon (1987b:206; 1980:327; 1988b:248; and elsewhere) considers that most, but not all, were manumitted (also see Papoulia 1963:4–10). Because mamlūks' children were raised Muslim, they could not be sold as slaves (Ayalon 1986:4–6; 1980:329).

5. This was decreasingly the case during the rule of Circassian mamlūk sultans, that is, after 1382. "The immigration of relatives reached particularly large proportions from the middle of the fifteenth century onward" (Ayalon 1949:144) and training became more perfunctory: "The period of study was considerably curtailed as compared with the early Mamlūk period, and a large proportion of adults—relatives of the Circassian *amīrs*—were admitted to the Mamlūk corps without passing through the school at all. This practice was completely at variance with the principles underlying the system of military servitude" (p. 145). Without significant external enemies, the mamlūks of the Circassian era relaxed the rigors of the whole system, not just of training but of impersonally meritocratic standards for promotion. The Kepchak mamlūk era before that was much closer to the ideal type of genealogical isolates (as was the Ottoman system through the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, as discussed in the next chapter). Mamlūk intrigues increased after the incorporation of Egypt as a province of the

Ottoman Empire. After 1671 local mamlūk houses (*buyūt*, sg. *bayt*, which included mamlūk sons) usurped the power and retained the revenues of the ostensible Ottoman "governors," who, de facto, were more ambassadors to the mamlūks than their governors (see Ayalon 1960, 1987a; Cezzar 1962; Holt 1961; Shaw 1962). In answering an inquiry from the treasurer of the French Republic of Egypt, Huseyn Efendī said that if a man died leaving no children, his wife should receive one-fourth of his estate and that the rest belonged to the public treasury (Beyt ul-Māl), which throughout the eighteenth century had meant to the mamlūk beys ([1801] 1964:67, see 143–44).

6. See Glubb (1973), Ayalon (1987b:210). "A magnate would usurp the throne, which on his death would pass to his son. Within a few years at most, the latter would be deposed by another usurper. . . . But the sultanate was not a prize open to all comers: the usurpers emerged from specific circles, namely the military households of previous sultans. The two principal nursuries of sultans were the households of Barkūk and of Kā'it Bay, each of which produced five rulers" (Holt 1991:323–24).

7. Ayalon (1968:327) discusses the fourteenth-century eyewitness accounts and explanations of Ibn Khaldun (specifically, *al-Ta'rīf* 279).

8. This was the point at which steppe fathers gave their sons a bow and arrows and expelled them to fend for themselves, or sold them (Ayalon 1986:2–4). As Ayalon (1988b:248) noted, such a large-scale traffic could not have occurred without willing cooperation in the slaves' places of origin, and that this included the parents of those sold to become mamlūks.

9. However, "If they have a disposition for learning they are taught the use of letters; and some of them are excellent scribes; but the greater part can neither write nor read, a striking example of which deficiency is observable in Murad Bey himself" (Browne 1806:54).

10. Mamlūks' wives and concubines were mostly slaves from the same natal region (i.e., the steppes of southwestern central Asia and, after the depopulation resulting from extensive removal of the fittest of the Kipchak young (male and female), Georgian (*al-Jurjī*) and Circassian (*al-Jarkasī*) ones.

11. The most devastating epidemic, the bubonic plague of 1348–49 was followed by severe epidemics at the rate of one every seven years during the last century of the mamlūk sultanate (Ayalon 1946:68; see also Browne 1806:76; Holt 1991:324). Non-mamlūks were also struck down (albeit not so large a proportion of the cadet *kuttābiyya*), so less wealth was produced and the tax revenue needed to purchase replacement mamlūks also diminished.

12. This is out of keeping with general Islamic doctrine, but, then, so was converting *dhimmi* a "people of the word," as the Christian youth bought to be mamlūks were. *Dhimmi* were generally accorded freedom of worship by the holy law of the *Saria* (Patterson 1982:312). See Ayalon (1980:338n15; 1986:6) on the vagueness of who was a Muslim in the border regions, and Piloti ([1420] 1958:34, 54) on mamlūk cadets' being "reduced to the perfect love of Mohammedan faith" before their serious military training commenced.

13. Circa 1394 in Damascus, Ibn Sasrā writes of mamlūks spending all their money on drink and prostitutes, even selling their horses and arms, and quotes Ahmad ibn Hanbal's despairing counsel: "If you feel no shame, do as you wish" (1963:212). In general, the "mamlūk birthrate was extremely low" (Ayalon 1960:157). Writing of his observations in Egypt before Napoléon invaded, Browne (1806:56) notes that mamlūks "seldom marry till they acquire some office. . . . It is worthy of remark that though the Mamlūks in general be strong and personable men, yet the few who marry very seldom have children. As the son even of a Bey is not honoured with any particular consideration, the women perhaps procure abortions. However this be, of eighteen Beys, whose history I particularly knew, only two had any children living" (in 1792).

14. Christian boys were also sold by their parents and transported by Christian merchants to Egypt to serve as prostitutes, horrifying William of Adam among others. See Daniel (1975:224) on it being more politic in Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to criticize the trade in boys than other kinds of trading with the enemy (of the Crusades). Boys raised Christian (and to a less extent, those raised Jewish) were taught to be antagonistic to Islam, so non-monotheists were preferred as mamlūk candidates (Ayalon 1986:4–6). Most of these were transported to Egypt by Frankish vessels, even when the mamlūks were fighting European crusaders (Ayalon 1988b:254).

15. Nāsir was also inclined to favor *halka* units (in which the children of mamlūks served), which also threatened the centrality of the mamlūk troops (Ayalon 1979c:765).

16. Also see Ayalon (1975b:37–39), including the outraged statements of the defeated mamlūk commander Amir Kurt Bay to the Ottoman conqueror Selim I about mamlūk superiority as horsemen and condemnation of shooting firearms at Muslims. In addition to a distaste for firearms, the increasing reluctance of any of the Royal Mamlūks to be garrisoned outside Cairo reduced their effectiveness in securing the borders of the sultanate or in quelling rebellions within it (Ayalon 1991:319). Since Royal Mamlūks refused to be stationed in Syria, *halka* regiments were much more important there (Ayalon 1979d:99; 1987a). "For most of the mamlūks the air and water [of Syria] were different and a great number became ill and some died. . . . Damascus swallowed them," as the chronicler Ibn Sasrā ([ca.1398] 1963:212) put it. For a late-eighteenth-century description of the mamlūk's Cairo Citadel (built by Yūsuf Salāh el-Dīn—Saladin—in the late twelftthth century) see Cezzār ([1785] 1962:20–22).

17. See Ayalon (1956:86–97) for a précis of Ibn Zunbul's history of the Ottoman occupation of Egypt, *Fath misr.*

18. See Ayalon (1987b) on why mamlūks kept other mamlūks from passing on what they accumulated to their sons.

19. Some Mongol children (stolen by their ostensible subjects who also sold their own children) were sold as mamlūks, according to al-'Umarī (1927:72,11.16–17).

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